

U.S. Vaccine Hesitancy Is Nothing New. Here's How The Polio Vaccine Overcame It | NPR

By Susan Brink

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The mass inoculation of millions of American children against polio in 1955, like the vaccinations of millions of American adults against COVID-19 in 2021, was a triumph of science.

But the polio vaccine had overwhelming public acceptance, while stubborn pockets of vaccine hesitancy persist across the U.S. for the COVID-19 vaccine. Why the difference? One reason, historians say, is that in 1955, many Americans had an especially deep respect for science.

"If you had to pick a moment as the high point of respect for scientific discovery, it would have been then," says David M. Oshinsky, a medical historian at New York University and the author of *Polio: An American Story*. "After World War II, you had antibiotics rolling off the production line for the first time. People believed infectious disease was [being] conquered. And then this amazing vaccine is announced. People couldn't get it fast enough."

[...]

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